

ARCHAEOLOGICAL JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Archaeological studies associated with the Lake Oroville Relicensing Project may provide employment opportunities for local Native Americans. The types of studies that are required and eventually undertaken will determine the actual number of jobs and specific duties, but several kinds of jobs can be anticipated and described.

A formal training class might also be offered to provide interested individuals with grounding in the archaeological methods that will be employed in the Lake Oroville study, along with topics such as the legal context of archaeology and the role of Native American consultants.

The Class would prepare people to participate in both archaeological field and laboratory work. In other respects, hiring guidelines and practices will be determined by the local Native American community or whatever organization it establishes to handle such matters.

Archaeological Field Technician

Field technicians are the backbone of most archaeological investigations. They are responsible for various tasks, including the identification, recording, and excavation of historic and prehistoric sites and other cultural remains. Specific tasks may involve site surveys, where teams of archaeologists systematically walk over an area to locate and record evidence of earlier human activity, or the actual testing and excavation of sites to determine what is there. Test and other excavations often require minimal digging and greater effort to the screening of soil, retrieval of artifacts and preparation of maps, notes, and other documents describing what was done and found. Another type of fieldwork that will probably occur as part of the Oroville project relates to the stabilization and preservation of seasonally flooded archaeological sites. As we understand it, this will probably involve the covering of sites with a protective layer of soil, rock, or other material and perhaps the replanting of native vegetation, much of which would be performed by field technicians.

Generally speaking, little or no previous experience is required for most types of fieldwork, with a short class or on-the-job training provided if necessary and new technicians teamed initially with experienced individuals. In fact, many of the skills and experience gained from this work can lead to future cultural resource employment with various state and federal agencies and private consulting firms. Fieldwork can, however, be physically strenuous and is not recommended for anyone who has difficulty working (hiking, gardening, etc.) in the outdoors when the weather is cold, wet, or extremely hot.

Laboratory Technician/Analyst

After they leave the field, artifacts, animal bones, and other cultural remains from existing museum or newly acquired collections must be carefully cleaned, catalogued, and analyzed in order to understand what they mean -- a job reserved for laboratory technicians and analysts. Boxes of artifacts from the field or museum are brought to the lab, organized by location or accession number, and then cleaned and catalogued. Basically, every artifact or group of related artifacts from a particular part of a site is given a unique catalog number that is entered into a computer along with all of the information on where it was found. In fact, the most important rule guiding this process is that no information about an artifact is ever lost, so that every item can, in theory, be taken back to the field and replaced where it was found. When catalogued, artifacts and other cultural remains are analyzed in various ways. Thus, animal bones and seeds are identified to species, glass bottles and nails categorized into various types that were made and used for different things at particular times in the past, and stone tools usually measured, weighed, and described in

technological terms. Although some of this work is rather technical and performed by highly trained specialists, other tasks are more easily learned and performed by anyone who is sufficiently interested and self motivated.

Like fieldwork much of the laboratory processing and analysis in archaeology is easily learned, requiring little or no previous experience. A familiarity with computers is helpful, but not essential, a more important qualification being the ability to work closely with others in a highly organized and structured fashion. Since most of the work occurs indoors and requires only limited physical exertion, laboratory jobs are ideally suited to anyone who is not at home in the outdoors or has significant physical limitations.

ETHNOGRAPHIC and ETHNOHISTORIC JOB OPPORTUNITIES

There are a number of opportunities for Native American community members to participate actively in the ethnographic and ethnohistoric investigations that will be conducted over the next several years by Randy Milliken and Helen McCarthy for the Lake Oroville Relicensing Project. Ethnographic studies are those which will focus on the pre-contact life ways of the Maidu Peoples and their use of the Oroville reservoir area; ethnohistoric studies are those which will focus on historic events of the contact period and the resulting relationships which ensued between the Maidu and EuroAmericans. In actuality, these two components of investigation overlap heavily, so that research for one will often contribute to the other. The research techniques rely on many of the same sources of information, and oral history contributed by community Elders is a cornerstone for both.

Probably the best way to think about job opportunities is to consider what resources will be used and consequently where and how research will be conducted.

Published Primary and Secondary Literature. These sources are books that are found in many libraries; the county library is an excellent location. After exhausting the holdings there, one can move on to other locations such as university libraries (CSUC). The tasks with this literature is to develop a bibliography, read the selections, extract the meaningful information, and make written notes, with careful references to the source e.g. author/title/publication date. This job is for persons who enjoy reading and discovering new information.

Unpublished Documents. These sources are notes and diaries made by ethnographers and/or historians, or local interested observers; newspaper articles; government documents (BIA); censuses; etc. They are held at a number of repositories in the general area such as: CSU Chico; The Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley; Special Collections, Shields Library, UC Davis; the National Archives, San Bruno; etc. The tasks with these materials is, as above, to develop a bibliography of the relevant materials, examine the documents, probably copy them, make notes on their contents and value, and make accurate references. This is a job for persons who like to search through numerous materials to find meaningful information.

Oral History. Oral histories will be collected through interviews with community Elders and other knowledgeable persons. Those helping with this task will help the ethnographers prepare for the interviews and accompany them in the interview sessions. This assistant(s) will take notes during interviews and learn how to create meaningful summaries of the interviews. This is a job for persons who like to listen to Elders talk

about the Old Days.

Field Inspections. On the ground sites identified through literature searches, archival examination, and especially in oral interviews will be examined. Ideally, Elders with knowledge about these sites will be present. Persons assisting this task will listen carefully to the Elders, take notes, possibly take photographs, possibly collect plant specimens, and learn how to locate places on the appropriate maps. This is a job for persons who like to work outside.

There are opportunities for a number of participants in these research positions. In some cases, we may develop intern positions so that young people can become acquainted with these study materials and how research is conducted. In other cases, individuals will be employed as integral members of the research team.